film art

An independent quarterly devoted to the serious film

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EDITORIAL

With No. 7 commences our third year as an independent film quarterly. These three years have not been easy. There were many obstacles to overcome, for a publication like ours meets with many difficulties. But the appreciations of our readers have given us courage to continue. Although there are still many ambitions to be realised, our list of subscribers is growing daily and our work, notwithstanding opposition, is slowly gaining recognition.

Since the appearance of our last number, the winter season, with its performances of the film societies, has begun. It is disappointing to note that the Film Society (London), the first in the land, is, as much as ever, a " social " gathering. It is a pity that this eminent institution has become more a meeting ground for the elect than a place for showing worthwhile films. At present it is merely a clearing house for the repertory cinemas. The films this season have, however, been of a considerably higher standard than last. At the first performance *Three Songs of Lenin* was shown—an epic of hard work reviewed in No. 5; the second performance gave us *Crime et Châtiment,* notable for Harry Baur's subtleties; and with Vigo's *L'Atalante* the level was retained. *The Great Consoler* was of particular interest because the work of its director, Kuleshov, has been much discussed and little shown.

The provincial film societies mainly lack fresh material and rely too much on standard classics. A little new blood is sadly required. If film societies must rely on pictures like *Le Dernier Milliardaire* and that orgy of sex, *Lac aux Dames,* they might just as well show an American film of average quality. *Being foreign is not sufficient justification to label it a masterpiece.* No doubt the country societies could get together and import some outstanding production of a more recent date than *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* or *Potemkin.*

A notable exception to the above is that enterprising young institution, The North London Film Society, now under the presidency of Mr. Andrew Buchanan, which does not rely for its performances on the well worn copies generally exhibited, but has selected, with taste and foresight, a sound and varied programme including such films as *Zero de Conduite* and Ivens' *The Bridge.* It has also given the premier of *Le Vampyre* by Karl Dreyer.

For the purpose of remaining in close touch with foreign productions, Marie Seton, our Continental correspondent, made an extensive tour through Holland, whilst one of the Editors visited France. Miss Seton had the opportunity of seeing, amongst others, Mr. G. J. Teunissen, who made *William of Orange* and *Sjabbos,* a film of the Amsterdam Ghetto, discussed in our No. 1, Messrs. Will Tuschinski and Theo Güsten, the directors

of *The Old City* and Mr. H. Scholte, one of the co-editors of the leading Dutch film publication "Filmliga", and brought back to London some interesting "stills" from Mr. M. H. K. Franken's film, *Song of Rice,* as yet unshown. Two of these we have pleasure in publishing in this issue.

The Paris visit gave us an opportunity for renewing some old relations and establishing a few new ones. The most interesting talk was probably with Mr. Man Ray, that foremost American-French experimentalist, at his studio in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce. The visit also gave us an opportunity of hearing the views of our Paris correspondents, Nancy Cunard and Bryan Montagu, the latter of which had just completed work on Jacques Feyder's film, *La Kermesse Héroique,* and discussing with them matters relating to the French cinema. We agreed that the French film was slowly losing its individuality by trying to copy the American cinema, a course that does not suit the Latin temperament. Otherwise Paris is still a film paradise, where pictures are shown without discrimination at the most impossible places and hours. The public have built a shrine to Simone Simon and Harry Baur, and worship dutifully. But where are the outstanding French directors? They, like the Swedish masters before them, have lapsed into oblivion, as they have forgotten to move with the times.

Two of our staff, Irene Nicholson and Bryan Montagu, are leaving for Trinidad towards the end of February. They are to direct a film which will be sponsored by the *Trinidad Guardian,* the largest newspaper of the Island. The story wil be designed to show the varied life of Trinidad, its industries (asphalt, oil, cocoa, sugar, grape-fruit) and its cosmopolitan population. The cast will be non-professional. It is hoped, in our next issue, to publish advance "stills", together with news of the production.

Owing to unforseen circumstances the articles of Fritz Arno Wagner and Basil Wright had to be held over to the next number, in which they will now definitely appear. Other contributors to No. 8 include Bryan Montagu, who will give a vivid pen portrait of Jacques Feyder, with whom he had the pleasure of working on *La Kermesse Heroique,* and Terence White, the author of *Modern Action,* who will discuss the relationship between the film and the ballet.

The Review Section of No. 8 will include a criticism of Chaplin's film *Modern Times,* whose New York Premiere has been postponed because of the success of *The Ghost Goes West.* Books reviewed will include "The Art of Film Production" by Andrew Buchanan. This book contains reprints of articles appearing in "Film Art" and is promised by Messrs. Pitman for March.

In response to our enquiry we have received many letters of advice. We are obliged to Miss Elsie Cohen, of the Academy Cinema, London, and Mr. Andrew Buchanan, Editor of the Gaumont-British Cinemagazine, for their respective views and suggestions, which had our full consideration.

ANSWER TO A QUESTIONNAIRE

MAN RAY *

Q. *Do you believe that the film is a superior medium of expression to theatre, painting, literature etc.?*

A. Any form of art that tends to a greater faithfulness of reproduction or confusion with reality, is an inferior art. This is the tendency of the actual cinema, and it is therefore inferior to theatre, painting or literature, from this point of view. The cinema is superior in its social efficiency, and as a means of forming the mind; it is the ideal medium for progaganda, even in its lowest form as a distraction or pastime.

Q. *Do you believe that a film director who is a student of painting has an advantage over other directors?*

A. A film director's work in the studio cannot be superior to his work as a painter.

Q. *What do you believe to be the future of the abstract and surrealist films?*

A. There is no future for the abstract film. Surrealism will inevitably influence the cinema, and perhaps save it from the nullity of abstraction and the banality of common-sense technique.

Q. *Do you believe that ballet, if treated correctly, would make a good subject for film, since it contains rhythm and movement? If so, how would you treat a ballet film?*

A. The ballet is an ideal subject for the cinema, much better suited to it than to the theatre. It offers new fields for sound effects that have not yet been touched. I should develop an entirely new photographic technique to carry it out in a way worthy of the musical accompaniment. But it must be straight photography—no painful image by image technique awkwardly naive (see the *New Gulliver*).

Q. *What do you think of the development of the film, and in particular the French?*

A. The latest French films are highly entertaining, very human, and not as self-conscious as the better American films. Chaplin's technique is better understood here than anywhere else. The medium is used indulgently, and with a certain disdain, which is very refreshing.

Q. *Do you think that the great French directors such as Renoir, Feyder etc. have progressed sufficiently and that American influence has killed the typical French film?*

A. Ditto.

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* Man Ray, who is well known in England as one of the leading still photographers of the day, has made three films: *Emak Bakia* (1927) an optical symphony; *L'Etoile de Mer* (1928) illustration of a poem; *Les Mystères du Château du Dè* (1929) improvisation for an evening's entertainment. He considers the first of these to be the best.

Q. *Is there still an active group of experimentalists in France, and who, in your opinion, is doing good work to further the cause of the French Cinema?*

A. I have never considered a film, nor any other work, experimental. There is a confusion. Once a film is produced it is a realisation. The experiment lies in the public's or distributors' reception. Bunuel's *Age d'Or* is the extreme opposite of any tentative laboratory exercise. The public and the critics are too poisoned and perverted to enjoy it. It's super-realism is so intense that the spectator mistakes it for a world to which he is accustomed, and thinking he must participate in its action, feels outraged.

Q. *What type of film are you interested in now, and how do you attempt to express your ideas?*

A. Since the advent of the sound-film, I have not touched the cinema, not because of aesthetic convictions; I have always believed in the necessity of sound accompaniment, and for that matter, in colour, in relief, in smell, touch and taste, anything that will approach this medium as near as possible to life itself, and thus create the greatest possible confusion with reality, which I think would have a very sanitary effect on the subject matter. My abstinence has simply come from the realisation that the cinema is primarily a banking operation these days, and I hate collaboration in any movement which requires the co-operation of more than one other person.

Q. *Do you believe in colour film?*

A. Answered above.

Q. *How do you look at cinema, and what ideas have you regarding varying photographic effects in film?*

A. I look at the cinema now merely as a spectator, and enjoy it immensely. I get a great deal of instruction out of it. (I've always had to enjoy instruction first, in order to gain anything from it.) Many ideas occur to me, in connection with my photographic practise, the cinema sometimes inspires me to paint . . . things that cannot be photographed without elaborate sets; I am sometimes completely overwhelmed by the amount of work people will accomplish for an insignificant result, and who revel in their impotence; I still believe in an effortless smile that illumines the world, and my ambition is to give an impression of tremendous production with an hour's work a day.

Additional Note.

May I say a word about criticism, which is not mentioned in your list of questions? Of all the useless occupations, fault-finding is the most thankless. This form of mumbling to one's self out loud, antagonises the public where it should be allowed to form its own opinion; the director who is criticised will certainly not heed it; criticism, I say, is a perversion fit for those who are condemned to solitary confinement in this life. It can only be justified by superior action on the part of the critic himself.

ABSTRACT FILM

S JOHN WOODS

I write of light. Of vast and quivering light on a midsummer's day by water. Of still and terrifying light offset by pools of blackness when the moon is full and high. Of light when the sun is down and before the moon has risen, when objects in a landscape stand sharp and clear, shadowless but separate, significant each in its own degree, receding in space from the observer.

Light and space—they are inseparable. Light is spatial projection; space without light is invisible. It is by light that the eye knows the world; by light that man visually exists. Which makes it all the more remarkable when we realise how little feeling man has for light and space.

If you take a white card and hang it on the wall it exists; it has a certain, if limited, meaning. If to this card you pin a smaller red card you add something, materially and in a wider sense: materially you add a piece of card (resolvable, but unnecessarily for our purpose, into more primary elements); in a wider sense you impose one colour upon another. Since the all-colour white and the colour red are both light behaving in a certain way, we may say you have imposed one set of light values upon another; and since light is spatial projection we may reach a still more dematerialised and highly intellectualised stage and say that you have projected into (three dimensional) space a (two dimensional) plane of light. The idea, whose statement is made difficult by limitations of language—itself a difficulty which shows our slight awareness of problems concerned with light and space—is, perhaps, made more understandable if we pin another card, coloured black, to the white card so that it does not touch or cover the red card. Now we have a three dimensional space represented by the ground colour, in this case white, in which are projected two planes of light *of different values,* one (red) being higher in the scale of light reflection than the other (black) and consequently forcing itself forward so that it is virtually nearer the observer than the other. By the easily apprehensible fact that the red is virtually in front of the black, it is at once apparent that these light planes do exist in three dimensional space.

Tilt the red and black cards so that two of their sides are parallel to a diagonal of the original white card and you have another element: virtual movement.

I said I was writing of light and space. To this I now add movement.

Basically these are the main elements of abstract visual art. Mondrian moves backwards and forwards, to and from the spectator in varying depths of spatial projection achieved by flat colours; Ben Nicholson dissects space with rectangles and circles varying in depth, again to and from the spectator but complicated by the dazzling elevations of his relief-carving, all white and tense and supremely right: space incised by light with the delicacy of a surgeon's knife. Mondrian's and Nicholson's light planes are removed from

each other in recession but they do not possess violent movement either backwards or forwards, from side to side or from top to bottom. John Piper and Moholy-Nagy on the other hand use violent movement in two dimensions as well as recession in space. Piper's slats pass behind and in front of each other in breathless, spasmodic jumps yet never irregularly, Moholy-Nagy's circles flow smoothly and with sure speed in definitely stated directions, his slips career sharply across space like shooting stars or bullets. Helion and Erni and Jackson stand in the middle. Light planes in space; Helion's shapes rotating on their own axes; Erni's tensions cancelling out into static strain and stress: Jackson's transparencies unexpectedly receding or leaping forward as light value crosses light value and creates a third. I have mentioned only six artists and those briefly, but analysis, which is not possible here, shows that all abstract or non-representational painting is primarily concerned with these elements: light, space and movement.

Next consider sculpture. Moholy-Nagy* differentiates five stages of sculpture:

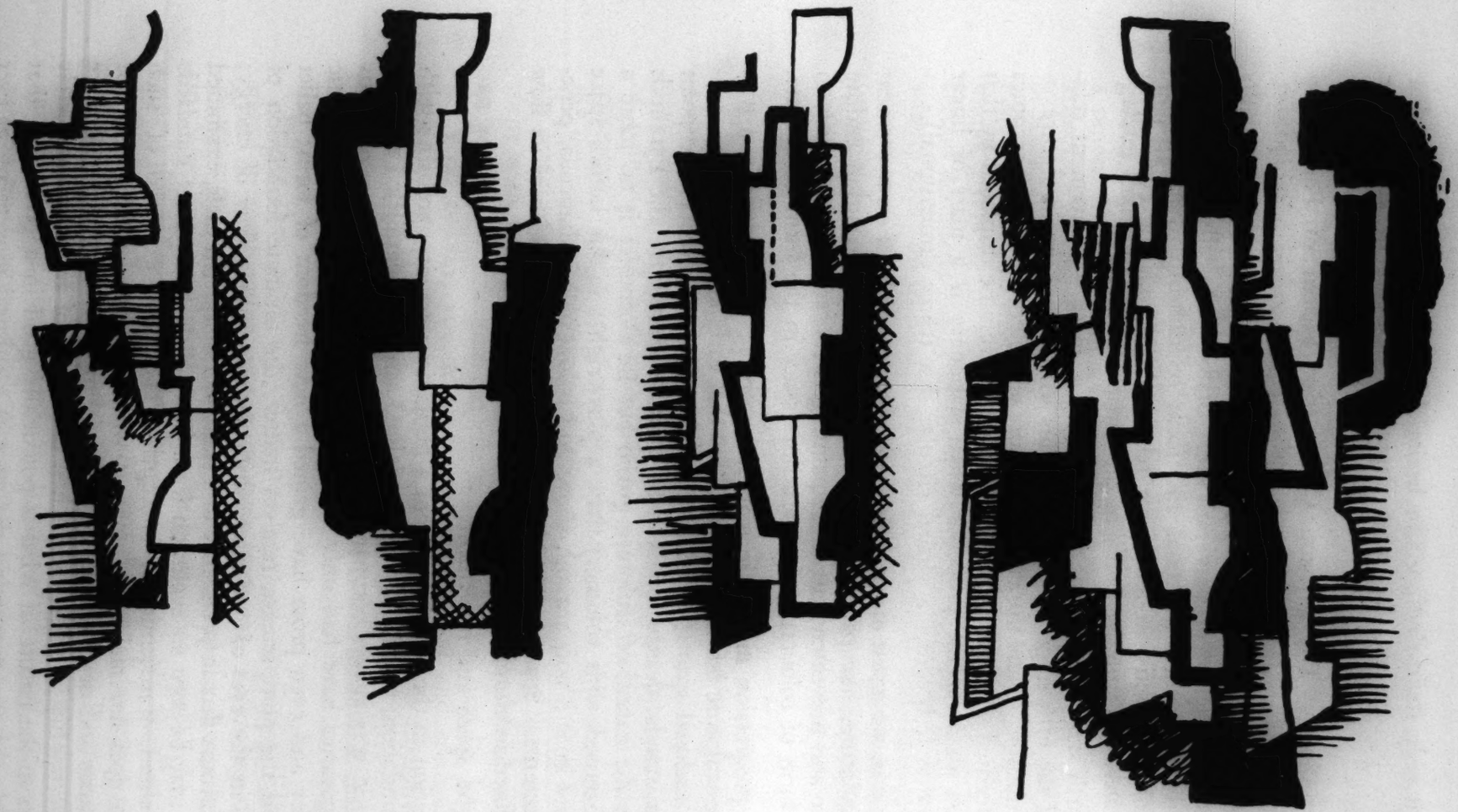
1. Blocked out
2. Modelled (hollowed out)
3. Perforated (bored through)
4. Equipoised
5. Kinetic (moving)

In blocked out sculpture mass is the most important element; in the second stage, modelled, mass plus non-mass or hollows, while in the third stage the hollows become holes, actual perforations through the material. We may say that during these stages sculpture = mass relationships. In the fourth stage, equipoised sculpture, the disintegration of material, started by the perforation of the third stage, is carried on, space is accentuated, and movement is born, either implicit in spatial tension or actual but limited by wires, supporting bases etc. This stage was first made possible in the Middle Ages with the invention of the clock and clockwork automata, although it was really in evidence before this in the shape of wind and watermills and similar power driven machines, which were not however practical for use by the sculptor. This stage really represents a transition in the direction of kinetic or moving sculpture proper.

In the "Realistic Manifesto" of Gabo and Pevsner, Moscow, 1920, we find: "In sculpture we eliminate (physical) mass as a plastic element. Every engineer knows that the static power and power of resistance of an object do not depend on mass. One example will suffice: railway tracks. Notwithstanding this fact, sculptors labour under the prejudice that mass and contour are indivisible.

"We free ourselves from the thousand year old error of art, originating

* In his very important book "The New Vision" to which I am greatly indebted and in which problems arising from sculpture are treated much more fully than space allows here.



PROJECT DEVELOPING

JOHN PIPER

(See Article by S. John Woods, page 11.)

in Egypt, that only static rhythms can be its elements. We proclaim that for present-day perceptions, the most important elements of art are the kinetic rhythms."

In the manifesto "The Dynamic-Constructive System of Force" by Kemeny and Moholy-Nagy (Der Sturm, Berlin, 1922):

"We must therefore put in the place of the static principles of classical art the dynamic principle of universal life. Stated practically; instead of static material construction (material and form relationship) dynamic construction (vital constructivism and force relationships) must be evolved, in which the material is employed only as the carrier of forces."

Of the fourth stage we can say that sculpture = mass + movement relationships and the fifth stage dematerialises this still further into sculpture = volume relationships. Here the earlier sculpture of material and mass becomes sculpture concerned with movement and the virtual volume displaced by that movement i.e. an aeroplane propellor when stationary is a mass of linear shape; in motion it becomes a virtual circular disc (three dimensional).

Perceiving this, we again discover the basic elements of light on movement in space. Sculpture, like painting has followed a line of evolution ending in light, space and movement but while painting is concerned primarily with light in the form of colours; sculpture utilises space in the form of volume.

A similar progression may be seen in architecture: architecture in a way started where sculpture left off: that is to say that early architecture was concerned with enclosed space (or volume) and has dematerialised to the point where it now stands, dealing solely with space relationships: the Pyramids are rather in the nature of sculpture grosso but Le Corbusier is no more a sculptor (concerned with volumes) than a playwright; in his houses space and light flow in and out, around, above and below in simultaneous, penetrating movements. Space itself is his concern in all the breadth of its flow and not enclosed in chunks or volumes.

Again, light, space and movement.

This evolution in the visual arts from a humanistic activity, probably with a totemic foundation, to a highly dematerialised activity is paralleled in other spheres: music was always comparatively free from humanistic associations and contemporaries have had only to explode the 19th Century Romantic school; poetry and even prose have gained a new freedom of form; ballet has jettisoned the plot; science resolves matter, the ultimate foundation of the universe in the eyes of our materialistic fathers, into a flow of energy; philosophy favours flux in preference to a static hierarchy. In each, examined historically, may be seen an evolution from humanistic, materialist standards to dematerialised, transcendental concepts. The mere existence of such an evolution does not make the point at which we now stand good: but when the causes and development of a cultural movement in one sphere are echoed so thoroughly in others, and when the nature of an art so completely approximates to the nature of what is potentially good in a given age, that art is probably the one composing the apex of a cultural movement, as ever

preceding the progress of civilisation. This, I submit, is the case with abstract art in our age.

Returning to the problem we have as the fundamental materials of painting, sculpture and architecture—light, space and movement. Now psychological research suggests that the senses work in closer co-ordination than generally suspected. The theories cannot be stated here, but consider the visual activity of yellow lines gaily jumping across a neutral screen and the auditory activity of a piccolo playing a gay tune; combine them and I suggest that something is gained from the synchronisation; the whole is once more greater than the sum of its parts. Consider again the rapid enlargement of a pinpoint of white on a black screen to a circle filling the screen and disappearing leaving the screen black; add to this a rapidly increasing volume of sound followed by complete break into silence and I suggest a great deal is gained in the synchronisation. To light and movement in space is added sound. We are in the realm of ballet and though ballet has achieved a certain dematerialisation in the hands of, for instance, Massine, it can never wholly shake off its human associations, technique and limitations of physical movement. Which does not affect ballet since an art exists in and through its limitations. But it does prompt us to ask if a dematerialised art dealing with light, space and movement is possible.

Film.

The word has been long enough ignored to deserve a paragraph to itself. This cursory but long survey of the arts has been necessary to show how they have converged on a point and how their present position has, in the case of painting and sculpture, possibly evolved further in concept than in technique. The painter uses pigment when his real concern is with light, the sculptor uses movement to chop up space. Could they benefit by using the cinematograph? The possibility of manipulating light, space and movement with greater freedom seems a real one; the addition of sound seems an advantage. Imagine the effects of an abstract film by John Piper with his vivid colours, violent movement all ordered and controlled, infinitely varied yet ever a unity. But we need not dwell in imagination on what painters might do if they used film instead of pigment. My question occurred to painters some years ago and I propose briefly to review the all too scarce productions since made.

Before they were applied to film ways of employing light effects and sound in combination were tried with lanterns. Following the research of Newton and Castel, Schrjabin in 1916 produced the Prometheus Symphony in New York and accompanied the music with searchlights. During the war Viking Eggeling, a Swede, produced probably the first abstract film. In 1920 a display of abstract work with lantern slides was given by Thomas Wilfred, again in U.S.A. and the same year Walter Ruttmann produced an abstract colour film. Other experiments included the synchronisation of light and sound by a piano-console by Laszlos of Hungary, coloured light being thrown on a screen while the piano was played; and a performance by

Moholy-Nagy, working in Paris with Gropius, consisting of the simultaneous projection of abstract light-films onto several concave screens. The illustration shows a light-machine constructed by Moholy-Nagy: a circular base is divided into three segments on each of which various machinery carries out contrasted movements: working under carefully arranged lighting, and filmed, this was most effective. But the problems raised by such films and by the abstract creations of the Fishinger brothers and, more recently, Len Lye, concern the limitations of the methods employed: the films are only photographs of drawings and paintings: the problem which stands out and confronts the abstract film artist today is how to employ the direct effects of light.

Obviously the film is capable of being used as a medium for expressing relationships of light, space, movement and sound. Its main use, as drama, as a mirror of social life, is not by any means its sole possibility. If my analysis of trends in painting and sculpture is correct clearly the film is in a position to assume an important place in connection with the graphic arts. In another part of this issue Man Ray writes: " There is no future for the abstract film. Surrealisme will inevitably influence the cinema, and perhaps save it from the nullity of abstraction and the banality of commonsense technique." Undoubtedly Surrealisme will influence the cinema, so vital a photographer (even still-photographer) as Mr. Man Ray, could not fail to influence the cinema. But that does not nullify abstraction. Surrealisme is fantasy and in one way or another fantasy has always been necessary to compensate for the deficiencies of the world in which we live; Surrealisme, or fantasy, is a means of sublimating the maladjustment of the human being to his environment. But it is not constructive and without a constructive driving force evolution cannot continue. Abstraction has, I maintain, the driving force of the centuries behind its thrust; Surrealisme has only the unsatisfied ego of bourgeois decrepitude. Abstraction must and will be accepted as the next and inevitable step forward in the visual arts in which the film, with or without the use of a camera, may play a very important part.

●

ARS GRATIA ARTIS!

JOHN C. MOORE

The film, in its present commercial condition as a form of art, is negligible. Yet there have been times, during the latter part of the silent days, for instance, when the film showed a distinct tendency to develop into a new and independent art, and one can only admire the endurance and the skill of the directors and cameramen of that period who dared to challenge public opinion by their advanced ideas and theories. For their task was by no means easy and at all times the French " Avant Garde " has suffered from the scathing criticism of its national press.

There is little that can be said in favour of the film in its present artificial condition, for it has been degraded as a form of entertainment worthy of intelligent support.

The German film industry should be admired for its sincere efforts to reach a higher standard in film culture, and it is only to be regretted that they had to cease experimenting owing to financial difficulties. Thanks to American thoughtlessness we have reached that stage in film production where there is no public for the classical film, with the corresponding result that we cannot make it pay. In short, we have been beaten by wholesale sex !

It was left to the Soviets to develop the early German theories of Robert Wiene and Arthur Robison, and they did so with great insight and unwavering fidelity to the ideals of the originators, which brought world fame to most of their efforts. The Russians have never been hampered by the problems Germany has been confronted with, as they did not produce films with an eye to financial gain. They had quite a different reward in mind, for they utilised the film in its most dangerous form, for the purpose of propaganda. It is a point worth noticing that they realised that the film, as an intermediary for propaganda, could only be effective and dangerous, if produced with the utmost skill, leaving no doubt about the quality of its acting, photography, editing and cutting, and it is only fair to acknowledge their great achievements in that direction. Never have they spared time or trouble to reach an artistic and technically perfect result, and consequently not a film left their studios which was not noteworthy for some novel treatment of an idea or some new conception of a theory. Truly a record to be proud of.

The advent of the talking picture, however, severely handicapped the Russian film industry, and with the exception of one or two productions, the Soviet cinema has not progressed adequately since. *

Neither can the present Germany be compared with that of the immediate post war period, although occasional attempts have been made to recapture something of the old spirit.

I am afraid that many readers will consider my outlook on the modern film unduly pessimistic, but I must repeat that the film, in its present stage, gives little reason for rejoicing. Some may explain the matter by saying that I expect too much, perhaps even the impossible, and will argue that a film should not be made for educational purposes, but for amusement. There is much worth considering in this argument, only the word " amusement " is extremely flexible and very easily misapplied.

Let me make clear from the outset that I do not belong to those who expect every film to be a work of art, but I am of opinion that some hard and fast rules should be observed when producing films. They should, for instance, all be based on some creative motive with a definite purpose and contain a measure of common sense. Not dirt for dirt's sake or superhysterical nonsence of the " Modern Age " kind. By all means let us

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* See " The Decline of the Soviet Cinema ", page 27 of this issue.

have films—within limits—concerning the life of streetwalkers and gangsters, but do not let us start hero-worshipping and sentimentalising their existence. They just happen to be part of the life of our community and we should accept them as such. On the other hand I do not expect a film, which is beyond the masses, to be treated with hostility either, for by so doing the public show their ignorance of the fundamental conception of the film.

I have been called many a thing in my life, but never an intellectual. Yet I have to admit that the Soviet film at its height, during the latter part of the silent days, was the film of the future. I am fully aware that the Soviet cinema is highly overrated in so-called intellectual quarters, who think that every film turned out by the two Sovkino Studios, the Mejrabpom Russ or the Vostok Kino, is " ipso-facto " a masterpiece, merely because it is shown by the Film Societies. In this connection I would cite Mr. Liam O'Flaherty, the famous Irish novelist and playwright, who in his Russian reminicenses voices the following opinion:—

> " I cannot understand the craze of our intellectuals for the modern Russian film. All modern Russian films I have seen are based on a theory of some sort. Art, on the other hand, is not based on a theory, nor on any preconceived dogma, but it springs out of life and is brought to life by a vision in the mind of the artist.
>
> To me the Russian deification of the mass as sole material for artistic creation is atavistic drivel, the child of mediocrity, which in its jealousy of genius throws itself on the bosom of the mob.
>
> Neither is it anything new, but an intensive form of the decadent theories current in Western European capitals in the years immediately preceding the war.
>
> In art ambitious theories are always a sign of impotence and laziness and mediocrity . . . "*

I do not happen to agree entirely with Mr. O'Flaherty. I agree in so far, that the manuscript is liable to suffer (Alexander Room's *Bed and Sofa*) being written solely with the purpose of propagating certain opinions. I cannot see, however, how the political tendencies of the manuscript can influence the treatment of the film by the director. One could just as well blame the painter for the landscape he is painting.

Neither do I agree with Mr. O'Flaherty's denunciation of the masses as material for a film. When considering the masses I have always thought of their conglomerate reactions as merely " amusing ".

In a film, however, masses become " interesting ", provided, of course, they are cast under good direction. They add power and movement to the film. They give it a purpose and a soul. Thousands clamouring for food; thousands clamouring for freedom. The masses have become one with nature and nature, after all, is the fundamental basis on which the film is built—or at least should be. For once we are treading on ground belonging essentially to the world of the cinema and far outside the scope of the theatre. The masses have become one with the elements: the storm and the lightning; the fire and the water. They all stand for power, freedom and movement. Of such all great films are made.

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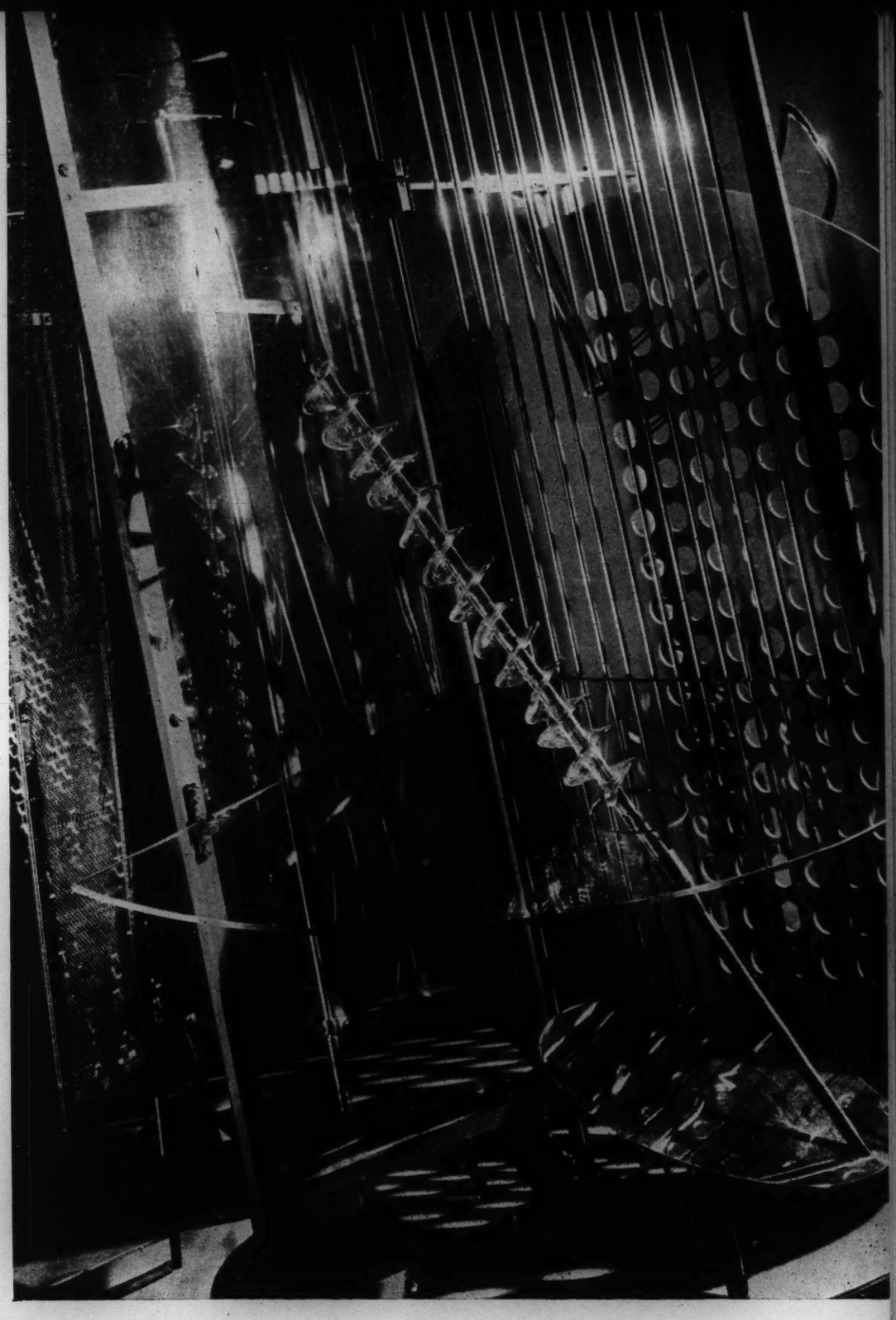
* " I went to Russia ", by Liam O'Flaherty (Jonathan Cape Ltd.)



MOHOLY-NAGY

An engine for display of light
(in different metals, glass, cellon, grids).
(See Article by S. John Woods, page 11.)

From the Film *Hopi*
Directed by Lewis Jacobs
(See *Film Art* No. 6, page 90.)

It is not for me to criticise the communistic theories of the Soviets, nor to decide whether they warrant a world revolution, but often, I have been painfully conscious of the fact that the underlying motives of their films— the destruction of capitalism and the freedom of the working classes, which, right or wrong, are after all their sincere beliefs and part of a suppressed nation— stand high above the cocktail stories of our own smart set.

Therefore, the manuscript of *Battleship Potemkin* may be open to criticism; not, however, its filmic treatment. There were many ways this manuscript could be dealt with, but there was only one correct way.

Eisenstein took it.

No higher praise can be given to a film and its director !

●

A LIBRARY FOR FILM CLASSICS

LEONARD HACKER

A Film Library, sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art, 11, West 53rd Street, New York City, has recently been established.

Action has been taken to collect and preserve every existing film of importance. Financed by the Rockefeller Foundation which has given a $100,000 fund, the film library has acquired some 200,000 feet of film consisting mostly of " first " items, beginning with *The Great Train Robbery,* Beerbohm Tree's *Hamlet,* Sarah Bernhardt's *Queen Elizabeth* and similar curios, through to the first masterpiece, *The Birth of a Nation,* in its complete twelve reels.

Harold Lloyd has given a full set of his comedies dating from 1915, and Mary Pickford a selection of her early pictures. Warners have given early experimental sound films and important silent ones such as *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1925). Paramount has given *The Covered Wagon, Grass, Chang,* and *Monsieur Beaucaire,* the latter perhaps the best photographed of early costume dramas.

Carl Laemmle has given *The Dumb Girl of Portici,* the only animated record of Anna Pavlova, and the first attempt to join the cinema with the dance, a film having importance as groping toward this still unrealised unity; even the title was significant. The film itself contained precious little dancing. It turned out to be a drama dealing with a revolution in Spain, and it is deplorable that the dances of Pavlova leave no trace but this fragment.

It is the purpose of the library to obtain examples of every type of film. There will be the best films of America and other countries, the German, Swedish, and Soviet achievements, the experimental, advance-guard and futuristic films. Examples of each type will be increased until the fullest possible collection is obtained.

Many of the reels were difficult to procure. Some were owned by

individuals who did not wish to part with prints, but were persuaded when the value of the plan was realised. One was owned by a Wall Street broker. Another was found in a trash can. Most of them will come from forgotten storage vaults. The nature of cinema is such that the constant mania for the new has caused people to take for granted the preservation of films shown once and then shelved. Amid the vortex of commercialism, few have taken the trouble to preserve specific items for posterity. Some films once thought great will now be considered insignificant, but these too will be historically important. Those qualities of retrospect that apply to old books and paintings will apply to great films, giving a fullness of value impossible to those who can see only the " now ".

It is the purpose of the film library not only to collect films, but to create a series of programmes, making duplicate prints to distribute throughout the country to various schools, colleges, theatres etc., a stroke of intelligence that will make the library a living thing rather than a mere storehouse designed to collect cobwebs. Without evaluation, even the best works have only a passing value. It is necessary for each film to prove its worth by contrast with all that have preceded and are to come.

●

TOWARD THE NEWS REEL OF THE FUTURE

I. NEWS REELS OR REAL NEWS.

ANDREW BUCHANAN

The problem of the news reel, and its tremendous influence, presents two interesting situations. Firstly, within the film industry, there is, today, a far greater satisfaction over the success of the news reel than ever before—the success being proved by the ever increasing number of news reel theatres throughout the nation. The circulation of a news reel is enormous; it makes more money than it ever did. As far as the producers are concerned it is beyond criticism. The second situation is that, with the rapid development of the documentary picture, those interested in non-fictional production are increasing their criticism of the news reel, primarily because it presents the greatest output of ' actuality ' on the screen. Nevertheless news reel material is inadequate, and cannot be regarded as a contribution to documentary production. This is lamentable, for films dealing with reality are so rare, that one would have welcomed the opportunity of being able to categorise news reel material under the dignified and important heading, Documentary. In fact, if, in the beginning, the news reel had been made intelligently, it would have expedited the evolution of the documentary film, which would, in turn, have influenced the methods of fictional production.

What then is the matter with the commercial news reel?

Fortunately the critic need not bother to differentiate between the half

dozen series of news reels; broadly speaking, they are identical, both in the items they include, and their presentation.

One commentator may be more facetious, more expressionless, or more intelligent than the next, but each reel appears to copy its competitor, and they all seem terrified to break away from a conventional form of presentation which they themselves have established. My criticism commences by condemning a lack of originality, and my temperature rises when I am confronted with stories which appear with clockwork regularity—cup finals, Ascot, the Derby, the Armistice ceremony, etc.; in the case of football and racing the majority of people would be no wiser if last year's events were shown next year. Abbreviated versions of football matches are illogical and uninteresting. The thousands who flock to watch professional football do not also flock to see a cut version of it on the screen.

Before developing my criticism, I am going to take into consideration the difficulties under which the news reel staffs work. They must shoot in all weathers. Frequently they have only a few hours in which to shoot, develop, print, assemble and release a subject. The news reel of today cannot be judged according to the standards reached by any other type of film production. It is a superficial survey of the kind of events which receive front-page headlines, but it compares badly with the newspaper which blends, with its last minute news, pages for leisurely reading; there is nothing leisurely about a news reel.

It would obviously be wiser not to criticise the news reel as it is constituted; under existing conditions it cannot be changed; it makes money; the public accepts it, and moreover has not been educated to exert its critical faculty towards it. Nevertheless, there are signs that films will be made which shall be so intelligent, and different from these jumpy little postcard collections, that, in time, they will supersede them. The most significant of such signs is *The March of Time*. It is leisurely; it is monthly; it analyses its subjects, presenting all phases of them, and re-enacting events when necessary. It makes a real job of an important phase of life, whether international peace, traffic chaos or the attitude of the public towards opera. It is not as impartial as might be, but that will come, as will, we hope, an anglicised version of this American product.

I see no reason why the best creative brains in filmdom should not be concentrated upon the production of the real news reel, so that it shall be a first class documentary production with a topical flavour. At present the news reel is in the hands of people who are fundamentally removed from the world of production. For some reason, probably lack of time, news reels are never produced—they merely happen. And here is a startling fact—that as the years pass, and with them the lives of famous people—no *first class* film records of them remain, for the images and voices of the great have only been shot and recorded by news reel crews.

The way in which quality shoots up when speed is reduced is exemplified by those instances in which time has been taken to prepare long sequences.

Last year a masterly presentation of Armistice in the Gaumont News was a reel in itself. It was carefully built up, accompanied by a simple commentary. It justified all the time taken to prepare it. Similarly, amidst all the pictures which have been brought out to show the life of our late King, one or two reels have emerged which are splendid in treatment, because time has been taken to think out an intelligent method of presenting the episodes, and to create commentaries which shall be integral parts of the productions.

Most news reels are released twice weekly, which is too often, for there is not sufficient news in the real screen sense to fill two reels a week, and the result is that editors turn to non-topical material, which is given the appearance of topicality by being included with current material. I never regard the Derby, the opening of Parliament, the Armistice Ceremony or similar events, as news, and I should not include these occurrences in a topical reel, if I controlled one. I should, if I could overcome commercial demands, reduce the release and portray all those phases of life which affect the people. The front page story would probably be ignored in the good news reel; what is copy to the press is not necessarily material for the screen. I should look ahead, taking material which would ultimately create a solid story—whether a shipbuilding achievement, an architectural revolution, or a political move of international importance. I should not present a statesman speaking for sixty seconds but would illustrate the subject he is dealing with, holding it over, if necessary, until it was complete.

There is something in all news reels which cannot escape my criticism by the excuse that there is no time for anything better, and that is the way in which their makers pander to national traditions, just as the majority of newspapers do. The army, navy, and air force are forever being praised, and rarely do editors reveal any signs that they can see beyond a waving flag. Is it an absence of brains, or pluck, or both, which results in the news reel contributing so consistently to the perpetuation of " things as they are "?

It is because they play for safety—because the majority of people expect to see shining breastplates—because it is " right " to glorify military pageantry, and because it is both dangerous and unusual to endeavour to influence the masses away from the nationalistic nonsense they have fed upon for so long. The tragedy is that the makers themselves do not use their brains sufficiently to realise what opportunities are within their reach, nor how narrow and biassed their present product is. One of these days we shall see a real news reel—but then, I suppose, the Censor wouldn't like it!

II. THE CAMERAMAN'S APPROACH.

JOHN C. MOORE

We need not probe very deeply to discover what is wrong with the news film of today. Its greatest drawback is obviously that, in its present form, the newsreel is *photographic,* whereas—like all truly filmic matter—it should be *composition,* i.e. a composition of moving pictures. The news film, by

a combination of successive pictures, can speak a language more plainly than the written word. But it should be pictures in their composition that speak; sound should never be relied upon to explain visual content. The film, being a rhythmic continuity of moving pictures welded into one harmonious whole, is already self-explanatory, and sound should therefore only be used to enhance, but never to govern, the faculty of expression.

This does not refer to speeches, political or otherwise. Speeches, by their nature, are not filmic, and therefore a speech delivered in a hall is more effective than on a screen. Ordinary incidents, on the other hand, such as processions, become more interesting on the screen, since they can be presented in their proper sequence. A person should preferably never be shown speaking in close-up, as it clashes with the elements of good taste. This has, occasionally, been overcome by turning the camera on the audience, recording their reactions and using the speech as background. The same applies to a concert. Neither the singer, nor the performing musician, should be shown in close-up, a fact that is generally overlooked in the cinema. The perfect orchestra should be heard, not seen.

The newsreel in its present form lacks all advanced technique of filmcraft: its montage, its editing, its cutting and its camera approach are crude and amateurish. In short, the abilities of the newsreel cameraman are not adequate for the function he is performing. He is just a photographer.

To say that montage and constructive editing are not of interest to the news film is evading the issue, for the transition of one picture to another, even in the newsreel, should be motivated, while the length and the angle of the shot, together with the rhythmic tempo, play an important part in dramatic expression. It is only by relation and inter-relation of shots that filmic effect is produced, and a different combination of visual images may entirely alter the content. At present the newsreel lacks that continuous unity of narrative that would make it an imporant educational factor.

The camera, as an instrument of expression, is practically without limitations; it has conquered space and time, in addition to being able to approach a subject from all angles: from the left and from the right, from above and below, from near and from far. It can approach a subject indirectly as the following example proves:—

The camera shows us a crowd, shoulder to shoulder. By mass suggestion the filmgoer is enabled to experience the thrill of the individual in the crowd, without even knowing what it is all about. The camera then moves upwards, showing us the surrounding buildings, gaily beflagged, only to dive into the crowd again, picking out single groups. Pleasure and expectation are clearly shown on the faces of the people. On the camera wanders, revealing the dignitaries and notabilities, looking very serious. The instrument selects various types and reflects their reactions. *

Once and for all the atmosphere of the scene has been established. From

* Note the scenario of Walter Ruttmann's *Little Film of a Big City* (Film Art No. 6, page 80.)

the individual the camera moves to the object—a triumphal arch—climbs higher and higher, till we can read the inscription on the banner which holds the key to the secret. For only now do we know what it is all about, why all these people and notabilities have gathered here: It is a reception arranged for, shall we say, the winners of the London-Melbourne Air Race.

In a scene like this no commentary is necessary, as everything, to the minutest detail, is explained visually. Good use of camera angle, blended with judicious cutting, will tend to enhance the content and dramatic value considerably. We have a complete record of facts and mood, something that could not be done half as effectively in words in such a short space of time.

The newsreel cameraman has the great advantage of being his own director, while the actual daily incident of life are his manuscript. Surely no richer field for camera expression can be imagined.

III. NEWS REEL COMMENT.

IRENE NICHOLSON

It is utterly impossible in news films to avoid some form of editorial comment; for not only the choice of news (which is, in a newspaper, the minimum of unavoidable comment) but the angles, lighting and juxtaposition of shots are in their very nature subjective. If these are carefully considered, their power is enormous—but so also if they are not, for they can ruin the whole purpose of the film by making what is important seem insignificant. Thus the collector of film news, however trivial it may be, has a responsibility which a mere compiler of facts for a newspaper can never know. Yet very little consideration has been given to this subject of editorial comment *within* the film itself, and the hoarse announcer is left to impose his rhetoric on the dullest of pictures, like an over-hearty gentleman trying to enliven a sleepy breakfast table.

On the other hand, and as a seeming paradox, the illusory nature of the film tends to distort comment into positive assertion. The audience tends to forget that there has been choice of news and choice of incident and presentation, until the whole of England does really seem to be one happy football ground.

Thus it happened that the showing of *The March of Time* newsreels was greeted in London with contradictory criticism. Those who had been particularly worried by the obvious and puerile remarks of British newsreel commentators, hailed *The March of Time* as admirably fair. Those who had been stupified by thousands of identical newsreels into believing that the world is indeed a playground for sportsmen, gala soldiers and benevolent royalty, openly showed their terror that it should leak out there were also road accidents, national debts and racial problems.

Actually *The March of Time* is an admirable attempt to present many aspects of a problem, leaving the audience with a direction for thought rather than a definite answer—a subtle and effective form of social instruction. It is true that this series, by its deliberate avoidance of " hot " news, stands in

relation to the weekly newsreels as the weekly to the daily papers. It has greater responsibility, more time for reasoning and careful presentation, and should, therefore, be judged by stricter standards. But this series is, by any standards, good—a kind of *New Statesman* of the Cinema, but snappier, more American and embodying the best in American efficiency and thoroughness. It should give the lead to a more reasonable film journalism. Nobody asks that the " rush " news film should be perfectly photographed or even unerringly chosen, but at least it should be more fairly representative of life and less childish in its assumption that the audience will swallow any thought provided it is sufficiently well coated with adjectives and bombast.

The March of Time should lead to a more general acknowledgement that, though there will always be a rush to see the latest events, there is also value in retrospect.

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DECLINE OF THE SOVIET CINEMA

Dr. WERNER BRANDES

The Russian film has always been a profoundly interesting topic of discussion, and probably no industry has been more criticised and more flattered than the Soviet State Cinema. It is interesting therefore to obtain first-hand knowledge.

The first thing that strikes one is the shortage of cinemas in the U.S.S.R. For its 3½ million inhabitants, Moscow has to rely on 32 sound-film theatres, in addition to 16 houses at which silent films are still being shown. That this does not suffice for the needs of the population will be realised when we compare Moscow with another city of the same size, Berlin for instance, which has over 400 cinemas.

When speaking of the Russian cinema, we invariably think of such masterpieces as *Earth* and *Romance Sentimentale,* but films of that calibre are no longer produced in the Soviet Union to-day, and the artistic heights of these classics have not been attained by any Soviet Director during the past five years. It may even be said that the latest productions of the Moscow State Cinema Industry have returned to the level of 1920.

On an average, only four or five films are shown simultaneously in Moscow, the reason for this being a dearth of suitable pictures. This is due to the fact that the cultural working plan, adopted by the State Industry, does not permit public taste to influence or stimulate the market.

A typical Moscow film performance is a drab affair. First a news-reel is shown, generally silent, in which a lot of people make speeches. This is supposed to represent a congress.

Three of the most recent feature films shown were *Flying People, The New Home* and *The Golden Sea. Hostile Paths* was specially made for export purposes.

Flying People is a sporting film, in which a young Communist woman leaves her husband, because he does not do any physical exercises. Later, when he risks his life in a parachute-jump from a considerable height, he wins her favour again.

The Golden Sea exhibits orthodox priests and disowned farmers as murderers and thieves, plotting against honest Soviet Officials.

In *Hostile Paths* noble Communists also fight hypocritical and bloodthirsty criminals in the form of peasants and priests. According to cliché the Bolsheviks dispose of these " revolutionaries " in the end and the final close-up shows us a beautiful young Communist woman in the arms of her athletic young lover.

Novaja Rodina (The New Home) is as may be expected, the U.S.S.R. European life and manners in this film are very badly depicted. The mental autocracy under which the Soviet public lives, apparently permits film directors to let their imagination run riot. For instance, a German Christmas celebration is presented with utter disregard to custom. By placing a monocle in the eye of the actor—Slav in features, Slav in movements—he is assumed to be a typical representative of the much despised bourgeoisie. There is only one criticism that can be applied to the above films—ELEMENTARY. Heroes and villains, reminicent of the Pearl White serial days, crowd the screen. The propaganda is obvious, not even subtle, and the characters are grotesquely distorted and overdrawn.

In any other part of the world, these pictures would deservedly run to empty houses. The boredom of the productions is fully felt by the Russian public witness when, by some mistake, a foreign film finds its way to Moscow. For several months past a sentimental Hungarian picture has been running in the capital with great success. For once, the audience was permitted to see a film without political tendencies, in which well dressed people moved about in beautiful surroundings and clean streets: for once the audience could, after a surfeit of propaganda, laugh and enjoy a glimpse of that dream world, far outside the Soviet borders !

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A SPANISH DIRECTOR

HAROLD LOWENSTEIN

Benito Perojo has now emerged as the leading director in Spain. He is still young and has not made many films, but with each one he has made artistic, if not technical, progress.

Before directing in Spain, he spent some years in France and in the United States. To start with the origin of his technique was clearly apparent. His own feeling was buried beneath a consciousness of how things should be done. He treated different situations, different emotional developments (drama, satire, slapstick) in the manner in which the exponents of these

The above drawings are copies of coloured advertising cartoons, produced by Georges Pál and his technical staff of twenty at his own studio in Einhoven (Holland). By the leading critics on the Continent Georges Pál is considered to rank amongst the foremost cartoonists in Europe, and at the Advertising Exhibition in Berlin, in competition with other leading film cartoonists, his pictures "The Ether-Ship" and "The Magic Atlas" were awarded the first and second prizes respectively.

(NOTE: In making these cartoons the Gasparcolor three colour process (red, green and blue) was used.)

Reproduced by kind permission of Georges Pál,

Two Stills from *Song of the Rice*
Directed by H. K. FRANKEN
(See page 8)

various styles would have treated them. He threw them together: a dramatic scene of a man escaping from prison, tense drama; followed without warning by a neck and neck police v. gangster chase, so over-treated à la Americaine that the structure flopped.

His characters alone held his films together. He put them in situations fantastically alien from one another. A melodramatic speech by a convict to the steerage passengers of the ship on which he is escaping from Spain, suddenly develops into a pure Clair musical, as the other passengers are led up the staircase to invade the first-class ballroom. There they force the rich passengers back to the steerage, where they change clothes with them for a regular Laurel and Hardy supper party. But through it all, though it seems a miracle, his characters remain consistent.

Two of Perojo's films are constructed round the relationship of father and daughter. This is an unusual theme for a film, especially for one made in Spain. Although the leading girls in both films are Spanish, they are unlike their prototype, being athletic and emancipated.

When I met Perojo he seemed anxious to convince me that he took his films seriously, and that he hoped to influence the cultural advances of his country along Western lines. From his latest film it is difficult to tell what progress he has made in that direction, but undoubtedly he has advanced greatly in the understanding of film itself. His latest work, *Es mi hombre* (*He is my man*—but not in the American sense!), is similar to his earlier films, but his style is becoming his own, a vital point in the development of an artist.

Perojo, alone among the handful of Spanish directors, is outstanding. Internationally he does not rank among the great directors, but he is making real progress and is worthy of serious consideration.

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THE CARTOON AND ITS MUSICAL SCORE

Based on an Essay by **BERNARD HUTH**

The cartoon takes an important place in the cinema to-day. No proposition is impossible to its creator, that magician of the film, who can make forms and colours—in no way related to matter—respond to the rhythm of music. Who can subjugate Time and prolong seconds as hours—even days.

To bring drawings to life is one of the most difficult, though one of the most worthwhile tasks imaginable, and it takes considerable time. Drawn lines being unmovable, the cartoonist is obliged to make a separate drawing of each film picture. Every second of movement requires 24 separate drawings, so that a cartoon lasting about four minutes entails 6,000 drawings. This gives some idea of the amount of work that goes into the making of a cartoon.

The cartoonist simplifies matters by drawing the stationary parts of the cartoon only once on the background; the moving parts, for instance the limbs of the figures, have to be drawn on various strips of celluloid. These are drawn in such a way as to correspond to the background. When the cartoon is photographed, its background is fixed in front of the camera, while the strips of celluloid are laid on it in turn and photographed. Exacting work this, which requires much time and patience and has to be most carefully executed, for at a later stage sound must correspond to movement.

To make an ordinary sound film is a comparatively simple matter. To make the musical score and relative sound effects fit the action in a cartoon however, is a difficult proposition and can only be achieved by making the sound record before the cartoon. The sound strips are then measured to the fraction of an inch, converted into terms of film pictures, and finally the photographing of the drawings actually commences. No less complicated method has yet been found.

Before the first sound is made or the first picture drawn, the manuscript has to be completed in all details. In the manuscript a rough situation sketch is made for each scene and the approximate length is calculated. With the aid of this plan, which is actually a film in itself, the composer is enabled to visualise the cartoon as a complete whole. In collaboration with the cartoonist, the artist then composes the music, and the final result is run through the projector for testing.

To the outsider such a sound test appears extremely funny. Somebody laughs, a shot is fired, a bell is rung and weird noises are heard without apparent reason. Hearing these sounds, even the cartoonist becomes depressed. What will happen, if he has made this scene too long and this one too short, if a certain sound effect, in combination with the image, is no longer funny but ridiculous?

Experience and creative ability is needed for work of this type, as the drawing and final photographing of the material is based on imagination. The drawings on paper and the strips of celluloid do not move. Whether the movements of the puppets are clumsy or elegant, humourous or primitive, in rhythm with the music or out of tune, can only be ascertained when the work is completed . . . . and then it is too late for alterations.

The success of a cartoon depends on a thorough preparation and a close understanding among all co-operators. Although 6,000 drawings are necessary for one short film, the work is not dull. Every line must be well thought out and every scene creates fresh problems. Everybody, from the youngest apprentice who does the tracing, to the cartoonist himself, is equally responsible for the success of the film. And when finally, after weeks and sometimes months of labour the film is shown and everything works out as imagined, the cartoonist considers he is fully rewarded for his efforts as a creative artist.

ESCAPE, A FABLE

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE

A scenario for amateurs. Few actors are necessary and no acting ability; there are no elaborate sets, and the tricks are all tricks of cutting. The amateur is not, therefore, at any disadvantage and is working within the limits imposed by finance and material, limits which should not be seriously cramping!

This treatment could be carried out in no medium but the film, and it thus provides an excellent exercise for the film student. There is plenty of scope for individual treatment.

The film "fable" is a form more suited to the home than to the commercial cinema, and has so far been little used. In a different style, it is as powerful a form of social commentary as the film "document".

A pavement artist is at work. For him there are two simultaneous and simplified worlds, that of the pictures he draws, and that of the feet passing by them. On the latter depends the money in his cap. There is not much of it, so ironically he sketches some coins on the pavement. It is not a great sum even then and, carried away by the visualisation of his wish, he draws more coins, then notes and, finally, feverishly makes rough drawings of bags of money with fantastic sums written on them.

While he has been doing this a pair of feet, one of them limping very slightly, have come up and stopped by him. For a little they stop motionless, and he is too absorbed to notice them. Then one deliberately stamps on his chalks and crushes them. The artist is brought back out of his fancies, and makes an instinctive grab to save the chalks. He finds his hands resting on the crushed fragments, and the feet are gone, but a new piece lies in place of that with which he was making the drawings of wealth.

Bewildered, he drums his fingers, then picks up the new piece of chalk and aimlessly draws circles among the coins he has drawn. Looking down he stops in the middle of completing a circle, for near his hand are some real coins that were certainly not there before. Automatically he completes the circle from where he had paused. As he does so it turns into a real coin. He draws another circle. The same thing happens. Then follows a frenzy of drawing. Only when the pavement is covered with coins and notes, and he has to stop to clutch some that are blowing away, does he realize that the chalk is worn down to half its original length. He gathers up the money and, rising from his knees, sets out for the world above waist level that is now open to him. Behind, on the pavement, the pictures that formed his stock in trade are half obliterated by fantastic scribblings of numerals, £. s. d. and $ marks, and an overlooked note is blowing slowly away.

Coming towards him is a girl carrying an easel and canvas. She has evidently been copying at some art gallery. The idea of such a tame form of art amuses him, and he snatches the canvas from her to show what kind of drawing is really worth while. The picture is a copy of Leonardo's *Virgin and St. Anne,* and in a few moments he covers it with scrawls which turn into money. But the girl has screamed for help, and feet are running up

to him. Furiously he dashes the money in her face, and runs off.

The feet are coming from all directions and he is trapped, with the pavement in front and a brick wall behind him. There comes to him the idea of other manifestations of the power of chalk,—traffic stopping for pedestrian crossings, crowds following hands and arrows. With his back to the wall he draws a half circle round himself. As the feet reach this chalk line they stop and recoil, as if they had run into a solid wall. But they do not go away. He is completely hemmed in against the wall by a half circle of chalk outside which are the feet of his pursuers, waiting.

The wall is blank but for the shadows of the waiting crowd. In desperation he scribbles on it the outline of a revolver, which becomes real. He fires outward into the crowd. The feet round the circle do not move, but on to the pavement falls a piece of metal,—the flattened bullet. He is held inside the circle as the crowd are held outside.

There is only the stump of the chalk left, and with it he draws a door on the wall. While he is drawing the shadows of the crowd seem to threaten him. He finishes the handle; there is still a little chalk left. He puts his hand to the drawing of the handle, there is a real knob in his grasp, attached to a real door, through which he goes. As the door closes it is once more the chalk drawing on the wall.

The pavement artist is in open country. He sits down on the grass and rests. The limping feet come to him through the grass. As the shadow of their owner falls across him he looks up, jumps to his feet, and runs. The feet of his pursuer do not go any faster, but when the running man stops for breath the shadow falls across him almost at once. He runs suddenly turns round, and fires a shot from the revolver. A hole appears in the shirt of the limping man, who continues to advance at the same rate. The rest of the shots are fired, with no more result than four more holes in the shirt. Throwing away the revolver he runs till he finds himself against a fence. He looks round and, in a desperate hurry, uses the remaining fragment of chalk to draw a door on the fence, with a keyhole and key. As he draws the key the last fragment of chalk runs out, and he has in his hand a key without wards. The shadow of the limping man runs up the wall as he comes near.

In the world which he has left, hands are passing over, and knuckles are rapping at a wall on which there is a crude drawing of a door.

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STOP PRESS NOTE:

Mr. Paul Rotha's new book on documentary, which seems to deserve more than a cursory comment, has been held over for a detailed review in No. 8.

REVIEW SECTION

FRIESENNOT.

A Delta Film *directed by* Werner Kortwich.

Camera: Sepp Allgeier.
Musical Score: Walter Gronostay.
Cast: Friedrich Kaysler, Herman Schomburg, Inkijinoff and Jessie Viroph.

Here is a German film which stands out by its sheer simplicity. There are no stars, no great names, with the exception perhaps of Sepp Allgeier, Dr. Arnold Fanck's favourite cameraman.

The tale is similar to that of *Flüchtlinge,* only soberer in its representation, since there is no call for Hans Albers' heroics. The story deals with the descendants of those Frisians, who, for religious reasons, left their country centuries ago and settled in the forests of the Volga; their fight against the Red Armies and their efforts to maintain law and order. Living remote from the world, they do not know its disillusionments. To sacrifice one's life is not asking too much, so that honour and freedom may be defended. It is a clash of two different worlds.

The dialogue of the film is measured and slow and the music "heavy"; they belong to the soil, like the characters. The photography possesses a beautiful quality throughout, almost Rembrandt-like in its use of light and shade. Light and shade are symbolical and convey an inner meaning—the clash between the good and the bad. Shade is used to emphasise light, and the few gay moments in the film reveal the seriousness of the story. In their sequence the pictures flow like a ballad full of the mysteries of life. Mette, the light-hearted girl, is placed in the sun, whilst the others stand in half shadows. Such contrasting scenes, bearing inner relationship, are frequently used.

There is a perfectly conceived scene in which soldiers of the Red Army on horseback ride from the open country into the deep forest amid a cloud of dust and shimmering foliage, fading into a ghostly haze which gives an eerie impression of impending disaster. Another shot shows us the Soviet Commisar; there he stands large against the background, in a commanding position, thrown into relief by camera angle. In a single picture the importance of the person is signified.

Detailed montage is sparsely used. Where, however, it is used (dancing feet) it is effective. The characters stand out like woodcuts against dark uncertainty.

The Chief of the Community, Jürgen Wagner (Friedrich Kaysler) represents a typical Frisian—slow, brooding and strong-willed—taking a long time to make up his mind, but once having formed his decision, performs his task thoroughly.

Inkijinoff, of *Storm over Asia,* as the Soviet Commissar, is not depicted as he might easily have been, cruel and inhuman, but severe and just. This characterisation of a political adversary may serve as an example to the Soviet Industry.

Jessie Viroph plays Mette, the girl between two worlds, with an austere vivacity that accentuates the tragedy of her fate.

J. C. M.

THE GREAT CONSOLER.

Direction: Lev Kuleshov.
Photography: Konstantin Kuzentsov.
Music: Zinovi Feldman.

There is absolutely no use being false or artificial in front of the camera, because it will find you out immediately. *The Great Consoler,* as the Film Society programme puts it, "illustrates Kuleshov's method of exact consideration, prescription and rehearsal of every scene before shooting." The theory of Kuleshov is the antithesis of Vertov's theory of the Kino-eye; while the latter tends to accidental effect and a loose construction, these faults are, in a photographic film, more pardonable than falsification. Kuleshov's actors are confined by his predetermination, their movements over dramatised. They become too big for the screen, not heroically too big, but clumsily.

A curious distortion occurs in the idea of the film—the contrasting of an author's published works (O. Henry is taken as the example) with what he might have written had he been sufficiently courageous. O. Henry's own story is treated satirically; because exaggeration is a fundamental of satire, the fiction becomes more real than its parallel in life. Intellectually one understands that the cruelty and injustice of the prison in which O. Henry works is the real thing, the rest merely romance to console the shop-girl (whose story is also incorporated in the film). But artistically one feels the satire as a kind of grotesque reality, while it is impossible to feel the prison life at all, except here and there and as an exception—in the character of the Negro for instance, beautifully played by Warland Rudd.

Some tricks of the cinema are used by no means tritely: shadows on the walls, the punctured pattern of a girl's lace knickers in pretty contrast to the squalor of the room: a girl imagining her lover arriving, his sword jangling against his spurs, and how then he appears in unpolished boots.

The three parallel stories have been admirably cross cut, and it is in this that *The Great Consoler* is most important. This kind of cross cutting has been done before, but never so completely and never to the same purpose. It may lead to a new montage of similarities and contrasts, not of disconnected chunks of reality, but of whole versions of it. There is no rigid realism, and what is true for one individual at one time and in one place is not true for another elsewhere and in other times. The impressionists are no more and no less real than Canaletto or Giotto, and it is only the Academic artist who is entirely unreal, because he denies the nature of his tools.

This divergence of realities has scarcely been made use of in film. The psychological film, the surrealist film, the documentary and the piece of propaganda, may all find a new lead in *The Great Consoler.*

I. N.

LA KERMESSE HEROIQUE

Direction: Jacques Feyder.
with: Françoise Rosay.

One might imagine that the Belgians would not like the manner in which Feyder has portrayed their ancestors of the 16th century. He can excuse himself by saying that the film is based on a story of purely Belgian origin—a novel by Charles Spaak.

The theme deals with the revolution of the Netherlands against the Spanish tyranny. The Duke of Olivares has given his intention to spend a night in the town of Boom, and the Mayor and Aldermen, in their mind's eye, can already see the destruction and bloodshed at the hands of the cruel enemy. Fear inspires the Mayor to a strategic plan: he will make it known that he has suddenly died. No doubt the Spaniards will have sufficient tact to pass the town by, or if not, at least keep quiet.

The scheme materialises, but the women do not like the manner in which their husbands shirk their responsibilities, and under the leadership of the Mayor's wife, they take matters into their own hands. They meet the Duke and his troops at the City Gate, and their reception is so cordial that the Spaniards do not dream of looking for another resting place. The night that follows is like a page torn out of the *Decameron.* The husbands being safely tucked away, their womenfolk entertain the enemy grandly. The Mayor's wife enjoys the favour of the Duke himself. She makes full use of her opportunities and contrives that the Duke will enforce the marriage of her daughter to the young painter Breughel, against the wishes of her husband, who desires to marry her off to a wealthy butcher.

When the Spaniards leave the next morning they have stolen the hearts of all the women. The men are less pleased, but soon forget their humiliation when it becomes known that the Duke, on account of the pleasant reception received, acquits the town of taxes for one year. And when the peace in her own home is threatened, the Mayor's wife is clever enough to credit her husband with the success of the venture.

La Kermesse Héroïque was awarded the *Grand Prix* for the best French film of the year. The decor, designed by Meerson which were built at great expense by *Tobis* at Epinay, near Paris, really give the impression of an old Flemish town, and the sumptuous costumes of men and women, the movement of the crowd in the market square and in the streets, as well as the interiors, adapt themselves beautifully. Special mention should be made of the interpretation of the terrible visions of plunder and torture the Mayor and Aldermen have when they consider defying the enemy.

The Mayor's wife is beautifully portrayed by Françoise Rosay: a good mother, a tyrannical wife, a wise housekeeper, a clever diplomat and the

perfect coquette. Alerme is superb as the cowardly Mayor, and Jouvet acts the hypocritical monk with a delightful touch. These head an efficient cast, but mention should also be made of the dwarf Delphin, with his gaudy costume and monkeys, who plays the joker.

Some may think that much money, time and energy have been wasted on a rather thin joke of not very high quality. But a man who can make an audience laugh for one and a half hours, must possess a touch of genius.

And Feyder is such a man.

L'ATALANTE.

Direction: Jean Vigo.
Scenario: Jean Guinée.
Music: Maurice Jaubert.

The death of Jean Vigo, though he never made a great film, is a serious loss to the cinema. He had a poetic and sensitive imagination which had neither the old fear of ugliness nor the new fear of beauty. He touched on the crudest naturalism and the purest fantasy. And he had a sense of humour. *Zero de Conduite* is the best " boy's " film to date, not excluding *Emil and the Detectives*.

His worst fault, which fettered his imagination in the one medium which of all others should be free, was a tendency to probe into details as if into a wound. This tendency is aggravated in *L'Atalante* by the confined space of the action—a canal barge. The film is best when the characters leave the barge for some fun in the big city and when, the emotional background at last established, the characters are free to move. There is no false sentimentalism in the film. The lovers are very normal, jealous and frankly voluptuous; and the imaginative sequence where they are separated, but drawn together in their thoughts, is therefore a natural consequence of the past and not a mere surrealiste trick, nor just (though it is also this) a lovely pattern of movement.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT.

I. *Direction*: Pierre Chenal.
Music: Arthur Honegger.
With: Pierre Blanchar, Harry Baur and Catherine Hessling.

II. *Direction*: Von Sternberg.
With: Peter Lorre and Edward Arnold.

Hollywood has asked for it; Chenal's film will gain added virtue by the odious but inevitable comparison.

Even in the French version, the excellence of the production is the excellence of the novel, and if the film alters little it adds nothing. Honegger's music is no more than a reinforcement of emotions which are already sufficiently apparent in the brilliant performances of Pierre Blanchar and Harry Baur, and in the exceptionally high standard of acting throughout. If this is scarcely a film, it is a first-class dramatic presentation of the novel.

It matters a lot that the medium is misused, for the restlessness of the camera and the heaviness of the action make the length of the film all too apparent. But it matters still more that Dostoievsky's story, and especially his characterisation remain unchanged (comparatively, that is, as film adaptations go).

Josef von Sternberg has not been so successful in his version. It was to vindicate him from the stigma that all he could do was to photograph Marlene Dietrich prettily. It was to give that fine actor, Peter Lorre, a chance to do his best work since the murderer in *M*. The film fails on both counts. Von Sternberg has turned a complex psychological study into a clever murder mystery. The motive for the murder, so exhaustively analysed in the novel, becomes a sudden whim.

Wiene's old silent film of this novel, with Gregor Chmara as Raskolnikov, had, more than either of these films, the tortuous spirit of the novel. And that was many years ago.

H. G. W. and I. N.

FILM INDEX

MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY: (Direction: Frank Lloyd.) A beautiful piece of craftsmanship. Charles Laughton's Captain Bligh is in the same pathological vein as his "eternal policeman" in *Les Miserables*. The real merit of the film lies in the superb photography: the glint of sun on sail, the prow of the *Bounty*, masts and riggings and lines of rope, accentuated by low angle photography, as they swoop across the screen; the storm, the tropical calm. Over everything is the intelligent hand of Frank Lloyd. (H. G. W.)

LA BANDERA (by Julien Duvivier with Jean Gabin, Pierre Renoir and Annabella): An economical and vivid opening which soon turns flabby. Yet there is little parading of dark-eyed silences and all-revealing veils (faults common to most "Foreign Legion" films). There is an authentic atmosphere which comes from something more fundamental than accuracy of costume and detail. (*Bengal Lancer* had all that, and remained as artificial as a story of public school nincompoops governing India deserves to be). The ending is flamboyant and dreadfully heroic.

THE GHOST GOES WEST: (Direction: Clair. A London Film Production.) The best of Korda and the worst of Clair. The trouble with every one of Korda's films is the even tempo, the mild crescendos toward the joke that is never funny enough, the calamity that is never tragic. The best moment in this film is the procession through New York in honour of the Ghost—empty auto reserved for same. Clair nearly runs loose amongst the confetti but is quickly leashed again.

AN IDEAL HUSBAND: *Lumina* have completed Oscar Wilde's film mentioned in our last number. Nothing becomes staler than out-of-date epigrams, as Noel Coward (*The Scoundrel*) and Michael Arlen (*The Green Hat*) will have discovered to their cost. Brigitte Helm, an ideal choice for Lady Chiltern, gives a disappointing performance. Herbert Selpin, the director, did not succeed in bringing out the great latent talents of this actress, with her cold purity, such as Pabst did in *Crisis*.

Carl Ludwig Diehl as Lord Chiltern and Sibylle Schmitz as Lady Cheveley are good, but Georg Alexander as Lord Caversham is miscast.

LE VAMPYRE: (Direction: Karl Dreyer.) Not to be taken too seriously. Full of creeps that even the children will laugh at. Purposely and effectively primitive.

MATERNITE: A film made by Jean Choux on the banks of the lake Annecy. Cut to the rhythm of the musical accompaniment. This, and the very fine acting, saves a thin story concerning child adoption. A moving and interesting film.

QUELLE DROLE DE GOSSE: Albert Prejean and Daniele Darrieux, the stars of *La Crise est Finie,* have, with the aid of Lucien Baroux, made another highly entertaining film. It has been directed by Yves Mirande and well photographed by Harry Stradling. Full of enjoyable touches.

LAST LOVE: Ishiko Meinl is a Japanese actress who combines frailty and sparkle. Her movements are beautiful, and it is hoped to see her in more worthy films.

COAL FACE (G.P.O. Film Unit): Auden contributes words for a chorus which is scarcely heard through the redundant commentary. The poet is entering the film, though timidly. An attempt to dramatise stark reality which fails through insufficient unification.

THE FACE OF BRITAIN (G.P.O.): The commentary is a concession to stupidity. The film is full of panchromatic, rural and mechanical clichés, but there is some attempt to convey in tempo and photographic quality the social problems which have appeared in the development from coal to electrically driven power.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CINEMA IN THE SCHOOL. W. H. George. (Pitman, 3/6d.)

THE FILM IN THE SCHOOL. Several authors, edited by J. A. Lauwerys. (Christopers, 3/6d.)

The extreme rigidity of the kinematographic method exactly predetermines the visual experience of the spectators. In the classroom this is a drawback, for there results a powerful and concentrated form of presentation that demands, like mathematical notation, prolonged training for the mind to follow it.

Both these books show that this basic difficulty has been realised and is being attacked with some vigour. Mr. George, while giving a surprising amount of information on films, children, teaching, and the combinations of these themes, has succeeded in making the educational film not only a tool, but an adventure. The cumulative effect of the numerous illustrations, which like most " stills " are of little value in themselves, does much to help.

The articles edited by Mr. Lauwerys tend to strike a more official note. They cover most problems of the school film, personal and administrative, and are written by men of practical experience. If it were not for one serious flaw, which fortunately can be remedied, this book could be recommended as a work of reference that will stay valid for some time.

The flaw is unfair, and capable of preventing the greater number of schools from using the film at all. It is implied throughout the book that the only film gauge worth considering is 16mm. The list of projectors issued with the book mentions no projector for 9.5mm. film, no projector costing less than £17. 10. 0d., and no projector that is hand cranked, in spite of the fact that several of the writers point out the superiority of these latter for class-room work. The writer of the technical articles dismisses the despised gauge with, " A school that restricted itself to the use of 9.5mm. film would be placing itself outside the *main current* of educational film

production." (Reviewer's italics.) In other words, the makers of that alleged main current have directed it from any but the richer schools, who need it less than rural schools. The production of educational films is not a phenomenon like a river; it is the result of a deliberate policy. Why this policy should hush up the fact that good quality projection can be obtained with apparatus costing from less than £2 upwards is a question that has several possible answers, none of which involves technical details. Meanwhile, as a consequence of what may be only a survival of the "Millimetre Snobbery" of the early amateur film-makers, at least twenty thousand schools are debarred from using the film.

R. A. F.

PLAN FOR CINEMA, *by* Dallas Bower (*J. M. Dent & Sons.* 6*s.*)

I strongly recommend this book as one of the sanest and most readable expositions of a working film aesthetic that have so far appeared. Mr. Bower makes a number of necessary restatements, and makes them well. His main thesis, that the film of the future must be considered not as split up into cells but rather as a single, flowing movement, should help to explode the fallacy that the montage theory contains the whole of cinema. His wide range of knowledge (he talks in passing of music, opera, drama, poetry, even of the new art of posters) admirably fits him to investigate the possibilities of this hybrid art.

This book is, in its own way, as complete as Arnheim's, and forms, now that colour has arrived and stereoscopy is seriously talked of, a necessary supplement to it—though to call it a supplement is hardly fair to so original a book.

I. N.

THINGS TO COME. *by* H. G. Wells (*Cresset Press*, 3s. 6d.)

The function of a scenario is to guide the director and technical staff engaged in making a film, and as such the less it has to do with literature the better. Since a scenario does not exist as art or entertainment until a director has realized it in pictures and sound there is no reason why it should be published for the general reader. One wonders, therefore, why Mr. Wells who is not a specialist in scenarios should publish his script of "Things to Come". A very cheap edition of the original book, "Shape of Things to Come", would be a better safeguard for his reputation.

As a scenario, "Things to Come" suggests almost all the elements and tricks necessary for a spectacular picture; but as a film tract on the future of mankind (of which Mr. Wells is continually talking but caring nothing) it is extremely crude. The film which is nearly complete does more credit to the showmanship of Mr. Korda than the philosophy of Mr. Wells, which when stripped of all literary and political phrases is revealed as the crudest and most superficial materialism.

M. S.

BENIA KRIK. Isaac Babel. (A film scenario. Collett's, 2/6d. Trans. Ivor Montagu and S. S. Nolbandov.)

This book demands consideration as both a practical film-scenario and a story in what Montagu calls " pseudo-scenario " form. The form does not in any way add to the value of the story as story, and it is only useful to consider it as a practical job. It seems that a film has been made of it—and not a very successful one. This is understandable; for the story is episodic. The first two reels—which visualise the best—take place in 1913. Their main purpose is to get across the atmosphere of the court of beggars which ruled Odessa. The third and fourth reels take place in 1917, and show the first effects of the Kerenski and Bolshevik Revolutions. To get across these effects, Babel introduces many new characters and themes which confuse the image. The final reels show how the court of beggars was brought in to help the Soviets—and how the " King " of the beggars was killed.

If the general theme of the film is not clear, the detail is the work of a genius. Babel describes the gypsy wedding. " The drunken bride lays her voluminous breasts on the table, she swills a draught of wine from the neck of the bottle, scratches her legs under the table, and fumbles her way into the waistcoat of her husband, the meek Spielgagen. The guests support the cry of Daddy Krik: *It's Bitter*. The bandits, leaping on the table, pour vodka into themselves straight out of the bottles. Dvoira hangs down on the resisting Spielgagen, she hauls him nearer her as a stevedore hauls a sack of flour along the gangway, and torments him with a long ravenous kiss. The bandits smash crockery."

Frank Jackson.

CORRESPONDENCE

We would like to thank the many readers who have sent us their appreciation and thanks for the continuance of FILM ART. We append extracts from a few letters of specific interest.

The Editors,

I like the spirit of most of your glossary items, my only complaint being the very condensed nature of some, which, to start with at any rate, could bear a little elaboration.

For instance the process of " editing " surely includes, besides the " arranging " of complete shots, the shaping of the actual shots themselves from the raw material by eliminating the unwanted parts, which I suppose you might call cutting. Presumably the two processes are inseparable.

Also " montage "—are there not two senses in which this word can be used? Your definition seems to cover one of them quite well, though it is possible you are implying the other as well. The use of the term in art presumably derives more or less directly from the sense in which French engineers still use it, which is roughly equivalent to the English engineering term " assembly ". As concerns the construction of a film, the FILM ART definition seems to refer to the very important matter of the chronological arrangement of scenes which are consecutive in time. Good. But I have also seen the term used apparently for the *spatial* relations between the parts of *one* purely *static*

scene—e.g. some "advanced" abstract photographic compositions. A third intermediate sense, allied to the first-mentioned above, might refer to the relative movements of parts of one scene, which scene itself may eventually form part of a "montage" sequence.

I should like to have defined a whole host of technical terms relating to films and even to the mechanics of production, such as: *frame, pan, dolly, wipe,* etc.—unless such definitions are accessible elsewhere (?) Many of them are "slang", but for the moment they have definite meanings and are therefore language. Most of us know vaguely what they mean, but any ordinary word about which we are vague we can find in a dictionary. What I want is some sort of working dictionary of the terms which are being used in many places where films are made and talked of.

Many of these terms are being originated from day to day, and many are altering in meanings. This is inevitable, as they are technical terms relating to processes of which the technique is itself changing. Hence I would like to see as many terms as possible defined provisionally now, and bulletins appearing from time to time recording additions and/or changes. This can obvoiusly be done more thoroughly by a periodical than a textbook.

Yours etc.

WILLIAM WILSON-DICKSON.

(The suggestions contained in this interesting letter will be discussed in No. 8.—Eds.)

The Editors:

I am a waterside labourer, but that surely does not prevent me from seeking the beautiful in sound, colour and form ... . . I have for years now attended at various cinemas and theatres, bought records and obtained books with that one idea.

I attend regularly at the Forum in Villiers Street where I have seen remarkably good films, one especially that interested me being the film *Tabu*. That film reminded me of Melville's *Oomoo and Typee* and other stories. The colour film *Legong* gave a distorted version of life in the Isle of Bali (under Dutch rule); a good deal of nonsense was added as romantic interest . . . .

I know that there are a few theatres which have ambitious programmes. Unfortunately, the cinemas owned by the combines are not so forward in their ideas. The same old stuff is shown week by week. Just imagine the effect of a mental diet of that type on those who grow up as cinema habitues, going fairly often to the local halls. One might as well receive a shot of opium . . . . .

There is certainly room for caustic criticism, free from fear or favour.

Yours etc.

GEO. WM. FRASER.

The Editors:

I was particularly interested in Hacker's remarks on texture. The idea can be carried still further, as he presumably knows well enough. That is, if texture is generalised as those characteristics of the elements of any complete thing that are noticeable only by their effect in bulk (e.g. typefaces, "mechanical shading" and so forth), texture need not and cannot be confined to timeless (pictorial) material alone. There is a texture of action, as the ballet people know well enough (early cartoons acted in temporal bricks 1/3 second thick). This must not be confused with the macroscopic texture (intellectual and emotional) of Russian montage. Time texture must necessarily be discontinuous ("half tone" blocks in time) with films synthesised from 24 pictures a second, but this is no disadvantage. There is vast scope for new varieties of what are unfortunately called, and tied to, the label of "cartoons" in this direction alone.

Yours, etc.

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE.

The Editors:

Miss Llewelyn's picture of the loss of many good films seems to me unduly alarmist. I know there have been no losses to speak of in America and I hardly imagine things are much worse abroad. A few famous pieces are bound to escape, just to prove the rule, but I think most films are still around and, what is more, in reasonably good condition. And now that steps are actually being taken to preserve these, there is every reason to suppose that the future is safe—in surprising contrast to the prospect of even a year ago.

Yours etc.,

KIRK BOND.

The Editors:

Undoubtedly, as Mr. Bond says, there are many of the good films left, particularly in America, and I know a good many exist on the Continent. But in England it is a different matter. Mr. Bond appears to have a limited knowledge of the conditions over here in that respect. I speak, *not* as an alarmist as he suggests, but with several years of practical experience as a repertory cinema organiser.

Actually, my article was endeavouring to point out, not that these films were completely non-existent, but the difficulty of obtaining them for exhibition in England.

Yours etc.

VERA LLEWELYN.

FILM SOCIETIES

(Secretaries of Film Societies are invited to supply us with Notes for this Section.)

Manchester and District Film Institute Society (Branch of the British Film Institute.) Hon. Sec: 9, Chestnut Avenue, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester. Aims: To raise the general standard of public appreciation and exhibition of films for entertainment and artistic purposes, to encourage and assist the exhibition of films for educational purposes among children and adults, to encourage and assist the production and exhibition of films by amateurs.

Leicester Film Society (Vaughan College, Leicester). Have shown this season, amongst other films, *The Song of Ceylon* and *Three Songs of Lenin*. Have had a lecture by Ivor Montagu, and arranged with Vaughan College a course of twelve lectures by Leslie Cargill, film critic on the Leicester Mercury. His interesting synopsis includes: Appreciation as a function of knowledge; a backward glance; influence of the stage; the screen as a medium for personality; side shows of the cinema; highbrow versus lowbrow; a case for both; the future, television and colour.

Wolverhampton Film Society (Hon. Sec.: 78, Belmont Road, Wolverhampton.) Meet one Wednesday per month. Subscription 10/6 for full season. Have shown *Song of Ceylon, Rain, The Road to Life,* etc.

We are grateful for the Society's suggestion that "Film Art" should contain more illustrations. We hope to increase these in time, but feel that at the moment our limited space is needed for comment and criticism.

The Film Society of Ayrshire (Hon. Sec: 5, Marnock Street, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.) This is a new Society under the presidency of John Grierson. Is has shown this season, among other films, *Thunder over Mexico, Paris Qui Dort, The Colour Box* and *Night on the Bare Mountain.*

Oxford University Film Society (The Electra, Queen Street, Oxford). In showing *Kaleidoscope,* by Len Lye, they quote Mr. Lye's assertion that "Films should have nothing to do with straight realism. If the fatalistic construction of a theme is convincingly presented, it is reality enough to the mind of an audience."

COMMENT

Miss Llewllyn, formerly of the Forum Cinema, has been appointed Foreign Booking Manager of a cinema which is shortly to open near Oxford Circus, London, for the showing fo continental films. Miss Llewellyn has taste, experience and energy, and we hope she will be able to give us some interesting programmes.

Julien Duvivier has just completed work in the A-B studios, Prague, on his film *Le Golem*. The action takes place in the seventeenth century in the court of Rodolphe II, King of Bohemia. The "Golem" is the hero of a central European legend, and the film has tried to convey the mysterious and sensual atmosphere of the time. Duvivier, with the assistance of André Antoine, has arranged the scenario and is cutting the film. Harry Baur takes the lead. The film is due to be shown in Paris on the 21st February.

A series of shorts, showing Negro life in America, is being made by Roman Freulich in association with Edward Spitz, who produced *The Last Moment,* and Clarence Muse, the Negro actor and singer. Cast and singers will be exclusively Negro, and the Negro will be treated as a human being, not as the usual inferior animal useful only as comic relief.

The Last Four of Santa Cruz is in production at the UFA studios. The cast includes outstanding film personalities such as Valery Inkijinoff, Françoise Rosay and Erich Ponto. The composer is Walter Gronostay, who was responsible for the musical score of *Friesennot.*

Nicolas Farkas has re-made Dupont's *Vaudeville* with Hans Albers, Annabella and Attila Hörbiger.

From Czechoslovakia comes *Svitani* (*Morning Glory*), a film by Kubasèk, dealing with the Unemployed. The cast is non-professional.

Herman Kösterlich has made a film of *The Life and Death of Maria Baskirseff* in Italian and German. Lily Darvaes plays the lead in the German version and Isa Miranda in the Italian.

Pearl S. Buck's novel of China, *The Good Earth,* is to be filmed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Victor Fleming will direct the production which is in the hands of Irving G. Thalberg, and Paul Muni, who has been studying the character and customs of the Chinese, will play the leading rôle.

The November (1935) issue of the *Architects' Journal,* containing some 50 pages on cinema architecture, arrived too late for mention in our last number. There is a foreword by Sidney L. Bernstein, a plan for a super cinema by Robert Cromie, and for a news theatre by Alister G. MacDonald. J. R. Leathart contributes an article on structure and facing, and there are a large number of illustrations of cinema interiors and exteriors. The *Architects' Journal* is obtainable at the reasonable price of 1/-, and is published by The Architectural Press, Westminster, S.W.

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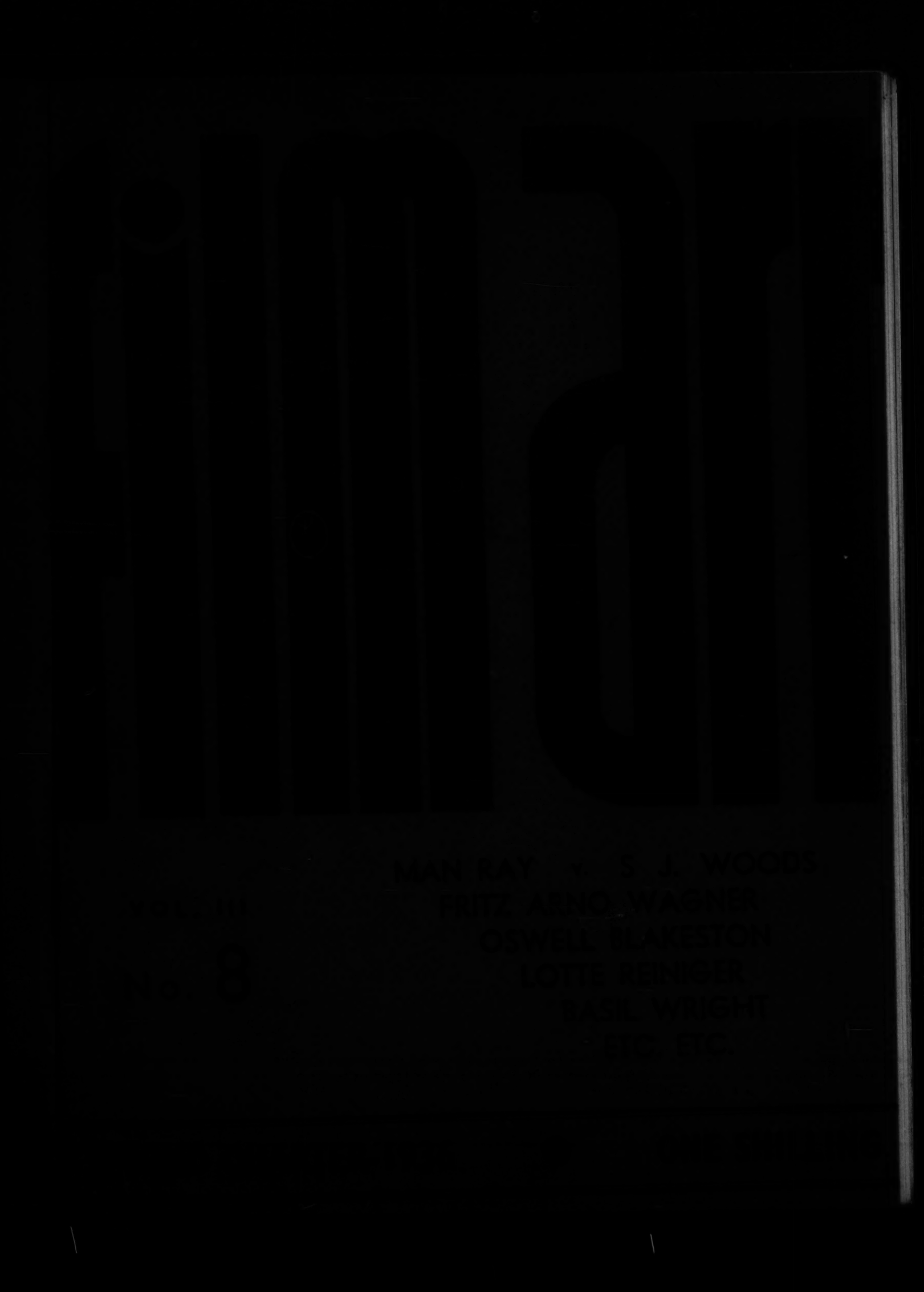
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